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The President's Page

THIS "PRESIDENT'S PAGE" is an innovation for LINACRE QUARTERLY. The Editor has generously offered this space as an outlet for expression by your President.

The best way I can think of to launch this page is to give a simple, straightforward statement of my personal concept of the Federation, of its makeup, its objectives and its limitations.

First, what is the Federation, as I see it? And what is it not?

The Federation's full name accurately describes and delimits it. As I understand it, it is a confederation—a loose-knit aggregation of autonomous, co-equal Guilds, each with full "states' rights." The Federation is not a national society, or a totalitarian organism, of which the Guilds are subordinate branches, or "locals."

These individual co-equal Guilds are the diocesan vehicles by which Catholics who are also physicians (or surgeons) can take their part in Catholic Action. Each Guild's members initiate and carry through their own specific programs. Such programs must necessarily be in accord with the mind of the Church. They must have the approval of the Bishops of the separate dioceses. Lacking that accord and that approbation, no Guild has the right or privilege to present itself as representative of the Church.

Each Guild has its Priest Moderator, representing the Bishop. The Moderator does not propose or formulate policies. As the Bishop's liaison man, he only guides and keeps his Guild in line with the mind of the Bishop—that is, of the Church.

"Why, then, do we have and need the Federation?" some may ask. The best answer I can give is the example of our American Archbishops and Bishops in having set up our National Catholic Welfare Conference. NCWC is this Bishops' clearing house for discussing questions and problems that arise in their autonomous jurisdictions.

By analogy, then, our Federation is the "NCWC," the clearing house, for questions and problems and proposals that arise in our individual Guilds. The Federation does not dictate overall policies and impose them on the member Guilds. All policies that come before the Federation come up—or rather

come in—from the Guild “grass-roots.” Only insofar as these policies offer some solutions of common or universal application are they likely to become “Federation policies.”

Necessarily, such policies must conform to basic rules that I cited at the outset: They must conform to the mind of the Church and must have approval of the Bishop to be operative in any diocese.

THIS SUMS UP your President's personal, subjective ideas of what your Federation is, what it is not; of what it should do and what it should not essay to undertake.

If you agree, may I hear your “ayes?”

If you don't, may I hear your “nays” and “why nots?”

WILLIAM P. CHESTER, M.D.

President, The Federation of Catholic
Physicians' Guilds